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Rev. Asahel A. Stevens. The Future of
Peoria. A Sermon delivered ...
Thanksgiving Day, 1873.

The Future of Peoria.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE

Fulton Street Presbyterian Church,

November 27th,

THANKSGIVING DAY,

By Rev. ASAHEL A. STEVENS,

Pastor of Main Street Congregational Church.

PEORIA, ILL. :
TRANSCRIPT COMPANY, PRINTERS, COR. FULTON & ADAMS STS.
1873.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PEORIA, ILL., *November 27, 1873.*

REV. A. A. STEVENS,

*Dear Sir :—*The undersigned, a portion of the gratified hearers of your appropriate and admirable Thanksgiving Sermon, of yesterday, at the Fulton Street Presbyterian Church in this city, believing that much good will result from a wider dissemination of a discourse so richly freighted with practical home thoughts and sentiments, respectfully request of you a copy of the same for publication.

Trusting that you will feel free to comply with our request, we remain, very truly, your friend and fellow-citizens,

JONATHAN K. COOPER,
LUCIUS L. DAY,
JOHN D. VAN NUYS,
C. R. KUHN,
N. K. BEASLEY.

REPLY.

PEORIA, ILL., *December 1, 1873.*

MR. J. K. COOPER,

Dear Sir:—The request of yourself and others, for a copy of my late 'Thanksgiving Sermon for publication is received.

Although hastily prepared, I deem the subject of it worthy of public consideration, and therefore freely surrender it to your wishes.

Very truly yours,

A. A. STEVENS.



SERMON.

JAMES 1:17.—“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Our chief magistrates of the state and the nation, have again called us to renewed thanksgiving and acknowledgment of the unnumbered mercies bestowed on us by our Heavenly Father. It is eminently proper that we should do so; and it is a matter of congratulation that the custom is widening and extending, and promises to become universal throughout the land. Our dependence upon the Almighty Ruler is *real*, and ought to be felt. And if truly felt it should also be acknowledged. And the fitting acknowledgment is found only in praise and thanksgiving and gratitude. God's goodness, his great goodness, his unchanging goodness, call for worship and praise, and the highest expressions of regard that we can possibly render. Such is our spiritual nature, that, if any normal state of the emotions and affections is maintained under this treatment, we must not only *love* the Good Being, whose excellence is without “variableness or shadow of turning,” but we must also find *vent* for our love, we must make some demonstration and find some proper exercise for the affections stirring within us. And this we have reason for believing is altogether pleasing and acceptable to the Great Giver of all. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.”

I do not propose to dwell at this time upon our ordi-

nary blessings, still they should not be overlooked, nor underrated. But they are so obvious, and so commonly enumerated that, I trust we shall not need to have them set forth in lengthy detail, in order to feel how great is God's goodness towards us in these respects. Our harvests, our abundant rewards of industry, our general health, our tranquility at home and abroad, our general progress and improvement, and growth, as a nation, are indeed matters for constant thankfulness. It may be said there are partial failures in some of the fruits and vegetables. Not enough to threaten at all the necessities of life, however; only enough to remind us of our usual superfluities and luxuries, which we are very well able to spare.

It may be said that a war-cloud has arisen too on the horizon. Not so great and so ominous but that we may still hope for its removal. Let the calm, good sense of the nation and the world have time to be exercised, and it is to be hoped that we, who have so lately escaped the direst evils by fair arbitration, may find a way of sustaining our honor, and of securing a far better atonement for the cruel and cowardly sacrifice of some few scores of men, than the costly sacrifice of many thousands more for every one of those so heartlessly destroyed. There *must* be a better way of securing right ends, and we must hope that we can find it.

It may be said too, that "*hard times*" have befallen us; that financial stringency is grinding us, and how *can* we, therefore, be very thankful and very joyful. It is doubtful whether this is so much of an affliction after all. We crave rest, and luxury, and wealth easily obtained, altogether too much. If a little reverse shall teach us all the true and needed lessons of economy and labor, the change may have the most happy effects. Dr. Holland makes one of his characters say, after having been forced to learn the lesson of work, "I had never before felt so happy, and I learned then, what the world is slow to learn, that there can be no true happiness that is not the result of the action of har-

monious powers steadily bent upon pursuits that seek a worthy end. Comfort of a certain sort there may be, pleasure of a certain quality there may be, in ease and in the gratification of that which is sensuous and sensual in human nature, but happiness is never a lazy man's dower, nor a sensualist's privilege. That is reserved for the worker, and can never be grasped and held save by true manhood and womanhood." God may be leading us then right along in the true path of higher joy, and seeking to develop our higher nature. Let us not forget the blessedness of work; nor even of any lowly work, if it be honest and needful. There is no occasion to be ashamed of it. Our work is our vacation. One has made the supposition of an angel being called to it:

LOWLY SERVICE.

If the dear Lord should send an angel down,—
 A seraph radiant in robes of light,
 To do some menial service in our streets—
 As braying stone, we'll say, from morn till night—
 Think you the faintest blush of shame would rise
 To mar the whiteness of his holy face?
 Think you a thought of discontent would find
 Within his perfect heart abiding-place?

I love to think the sweet will of his God
 Would seem as gracious in that seraph's eyes
 In the dark, miry, crowded lanes of earth,
 As in the ambrosial bowers of paradise;
 That those fair hands that lately swept the lyre
 Would not against their lowly work rebel,
 But, as they ever wrought His will in heaven,
 Would work it here as faithfully and well.

M. E. M.

Thus let us regard our proper work, and the hard times will not hurt many of us. And let us be *happy* too. A very common fault of looking on the dark side of everything, fearing evil, never allowing the good that is present and in prospect to be half enjoyed on this account, is well drawn out in the history of Arthur Bonnicastle's mother. "Poor, dear mother!" (he says after she is gone), "Most

fearful and unhappy while living, and most tenderly mourned and revered in memory ! Why did you persist in seeing darkness where others saw light, and in making every cup bitter with the apprehension of evil ? Why were you forever on the watch that no freak of untoward fortune should catch you unaware ? Why did you treat the Providence you devoutly tried to trust, as if you supposed he meant to trick you if he found you for a moment off your guard ? O, the twin charms of hopefulness and trustfulness ! What power have they to strengthen weary feet, to sweeten sleep, to make the earth green, the heavens blue ; to cheat misfortune of its bitterness, and to quench even the poison of death itself ! ”

There will indeed be some cases of real hardship. But if this stringency shall serve to dispel our illusions, correct our too luxurious habits, soften our hearts towards the more needy around us, and work in the way of depletion on our too plethoric souls, it will be for our salvation and not our destruction.

Thank God for all the *good* we still have. It is so great, and so constant, and so *superabounding* to most of us, that we have no occasion to think on the evil. Our hearts should be joyful and thankful, and our mouths filled with thanksgiving and praise.

But if you will now allow me, I will quote another text, and turn your attention to another, a specific good, as I deem it, and one that is less often dwelt upon. I do it partly to awaken your thankfulness in this direction, and partly for the sake of prompting that *improvement* of the good in question which shall make it a still greater blessing and good.

In the 48th psalm and 2d verse, we read, “ Beautiful for situation, (or elevation) the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” In the previous verse it is said, “ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised *in the city of our God*, in the mountain of his holiness.” And speaking of the same hallowed

locality, we are elsewhere told, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." And the disciples of our Lord, you remember, with wondering gaze beheld, and showed to their Master the great stones, and the splendid buildings of the temple. And since the destruction, foretold, and so terribly accomplished, the Jews still cherish the remembrance of the past, and mourn over the departed glories of their loved metropolis. I refer to these things simply to show you in what estimate their beloved Jerusalem was held. "Beautiful for elevation," it was to them "the joy of the whole earth," this city of the great King.

But how am I to get all this into our modern Thanksgiving, or our Thanksgiving into it? I will tell you. The grand, leading feature of this festival, for a long time, has been its domestic, social character. It was the glad gathering of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of uncles and aunts, of cousins and nephews, and nieces, that gave it its charm. It was the *reunion* in the *old loved home*, that made it the blessed festival it was. It was around the family hearth, the blazing fire of childhood's memories, that the hallowed associations all clustered. And that must be its character still, or half its meaning and its pleasures, and its profit, will be lost.

I am anxious, therefore, to identify it with your *homes*; and in order to do this, homes must be had, and must be lived in long enough to become such. And these homes must be located somewhere, and they must have their local associations and remembrances. And thus we come to the idea of our *dwelling place*, the *town* or *city* of our residence. And as we *cannot* have a *single* city, "beautiful for elevation," "and the joy of the whole nation," as Israel did, we must have our more *local* metropolis, the place with which we are more immediately identified, and *that* must, in a measure, be to us what Jerusalem was to God's ancient people.

Thus, by a very direct path, we come to the very place

where we now are, to the city of Peoria, to the place where we reside, where our homes are, where our children are born and grow up, and where our Thanksgivings are long to be celebrated, I trust, by us and them, even to the latest generations.

And now, having legitimately arrived here, let us stop a little and survey our surroundings, and consider whether we have any reason to abide and to congratulate ourselves on the merits of our dwelling-place. If I mistake not, after a becoming survey, the old exclamation will rise to our lips, "Surely the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Noticing briefly, then, some of the characteristic advantages of this Central City, the language of this text quoted: First rises for utterance, "Beautiful for situation" is the city of our residence. Is it disputed? Need it be argued? Must I take any of you who have long dwelt here, from side to side, from river to bluff, from north to south, and east to west, and point out all these views, these grand sweeps of forest and lake, plains and highlands, trading marts and rural residences, to convince you of the *rare* combinations for pleasing every taste, for diverting all lovers of the beautiful, and for furnishing localities for homes to meet every emergency. For smooth, and ample, and well-drained plateaus; for symmetrical, continuous, and beautifully rounded highlands, within easy reach; for wide prospects and beautiful elevations, overlooking city and river, and lake and forest growth, and cultivated fields, there is nothing like it to be found in our whole interior. In some cases, as in Cincinnati and Burlington, there may be higher bluffs, but for that very reason are far more inaccessible, and withal are so broken, disrupted and torn, as to be very unsightly, and prevent free communication from height to height. Similar remarks may be made of Keokuk, Davenport, and other localities. There *is* but one Peoria. But the testimony is so spontaneous and uniform on this point that I need not dwell. I only ask you to look, and

ponder, and appreciate, and come rightly to value the æsthetic conditions and superiority of the place in which you live.

Nor need I dwell at length on its resources. The yearly trouble and embarrassment experienced by our interior cities, their exposure, their losses, their hardships for lack of water, cause us to turn our eyes gratefully upon the ample stream that passes our door, and the cool and deeper fountains that broaden out before and for miles above the city. The calm and quiet Illinois is too little valued by many. But it shall yet be pronounced with a growing pride by the whole state that bears its name. It stands in the very *van* of all the bulwarks which nature has provided against the grasping monopolies of our region of country. It is our safeguard. It is a standing menace to the selfish and ambitious. It is a potent demonstration before our eyes the whole summer long, of the right solution of this great question of railroad monopoly, and cheaper transportation. How is it with freights as soon as navigation closes? How is it always some miles back from the river? And yet the farmers themselves throughout this great state, are too blind to see, too selfish to admit the value of this great thoroughfare, because they do not *all* live upon its borders. They forget that what benefits in this way a part, will more or less benefit the whole; and that we should promptly avail ourselves of whatever restraints of these great monopolists we possess, knowing that it will be the only certain way of obtaining more. Never let those who dwell upon its banks underrate the slow moving Illinois. When it shall have become the great highway of grain-ships, and war-ships, and all heavy transportation that it is destined to be, that grand inter-state pathway to which it belongs, will be thought a great deal more of than now.

And here let me drop a word for the lake. It is not river alone that we have reason to be grateful for. And this enlargement is not a mere *shoal*. It is of the nature

of a lake. It is fed by *vast and inexhaustible springs*. It would remain in this basin if there were no river here. And this extent of waters for some twenty miles, and of such a character too, makes a very different thing of our supply, so far as purity and healthfulness are concerned. Let the fate of the Illinois river be what it may, our water supply remains good and ample. It comes to us pure and abundant from the unfailing filtered fountains below. From this we naturally turn to fuel. And the surrounding heights, and the vast ranges of the river-banks and broken ranges adjacent to them, speak for themselves as to adequate wood and timber. There is far more we are assured, than when the country was first settled. And many acres are now cleared annually for wood; whose young growth has appeared since the white men came here.

And then as to the supplies of coal, can the like anywhere be found? Think of procuring this convenient fuel, with no cost of cutting and preparation, for less than \$2 per ton. And this any one may do every year, by taking advantage of the proper times and seasons. Think of the *hundred valleys and mines* on every side, about this city, where no perpendicular shaft is required, no complicated and expensive power to bring it to the surface, where no trouble on account of drainage is experienced, and *nothing* to do but move in horizontally, and roll out the "black diamonds" in a perpetual train. These ravines all opening their mouths towards us, point as plainly as figures on the guide-board to our beautiful situation, saying, "there's the city, the place for your homes, and we, and our resources, are at your service."

Let me barely mention in passing our numerous and rapidly increasing facilities of communication. Twenty years ago, on visiting this place, there was no egress from the city in a public conveyance, except by a steamboat or stage. In a year or so *one* branch line was opened up toward Chicago. Seventeen years ago next spring, an attempt was made to reach Galesburg by cars, to attend an ecclesiastical

meeting, that came near losing the meeting. But the journey was made, with long delays. This was the second outlet. And now think of our number of communications in every direction, and the speed with which we reach all points around us. The commercial advantages and increased business resulting from these improvements you can better understand and appreciate than your speaker.

But another point to be most *highly* prized by us all, you may not have thought so much of, or been so fully convinced of; I refer to the *healthfulness* of the place. A minister, by reason of his professional duties, is only second to the physician, in his opportunities for judging correctly of the healthfulness of his place of abode. And such has been my own experience and observation, that I am constrained to bear the most *emphatic* testimony on this point. Indeed, it has often, and long been a matter of the greatest surprise to me, that so few deaths occur in the society to which I have ministered. Knowing the ages, and condition, and apparent prospects of so many when I came here, and comparing them with others, where my public life has called me, the average length of life under given circumstances has been so much in favor of the people here, that I have called attention to it again and again. Leave out the loss of little children, during the first two years of life, and I have never known any place or parish, with which I have been well acquainted, bear any *comparison* with this in its freedom from sickness and mortality. These loose soils, and undulating slopes do not admit of the hurtful stagnations that breed miasma. And these free and driving breezes bear healing in their wings. There is, withal, a mildness in the atmosphere, that when compared with the Eastern States, or those bordering on large bodies of water, is very helpful to those predisposed to pulmonary and bronchial difficulties; and persons coming here from those regions have found great benefit. In case such tendencies are developed here, then a still more western clime may be better for them. But our average of health we may well glory in. Indeed, I am

afraid our good friend, Mr. HALL, who has done so much for the beautiful resting place of our departed ones, has become quite discouraged, for I hear he has committed his charge to other hands. But we shall all need it sometime, and I hope our hallowed grounds will never suffer from neglect. It is one of the spots to be pointed out with very reverential and tender feeling, as a cherished *peculiarity* of the city which is our home.

But I must not dwell too long on these merits and advantages. If you would not think me extravagant and romantic, and too much given to fictitious conceptions, I should delight to anticipate the future somewhat, and show you what could be done here. I should like to look forward to a population of fifty thousand, or even a hundred thousand, as I think could be justly done, and show you what might appear here when that number should dwell on these plains and these heights, with their corresponding wealth and culture. I should like to picture to you the fine undulating park that could be laid out on those tallest heights and beyond, on the north-east of our city, and then bring you around this a boulevard skirting above Dry Run, and the valley of the Kickapoo, and Horse-shoe bottom, winding in and out of another fine level park, somewhere on the broad plateau on our north-west, all a beautiful level drive, and away from all the dusty thoroughfares, and then emerging on Seventh avenue at the lower extremity of the city, show you the whole beautiful expanse of the lower city all at once. Could I take you over that even and shady drive, regale your vision on those charming valleys of woodland, pasturage, and cultivated fields; then from such rural sights, burst all at once upon the open city and show you from a single point all its great elevators, warehouses, marts of trade, temples of worship, and palatial residences, you would doubtless exclaim, can this be Peoria? This the city where I dwelt, and reared my humble cottage fifty years ago? But I must not indulge; I am sure however that I do not overrate our *possibilities*, and I think

not our real prospects. The place is "*beautiful* for situation" and men are finding it out. And such variety, such diversity, with such sweet symmetry, and beauty, and fine facilities for enlargement and perfection, I do think, are no where else to be found. And I hope the people who dwell here will yet become worthy of their place and surroundings, so as to make them more nearly what they should be.

At this point then, we are naturally led to consider our duties and obligations growing out of these facts we have been looking at.

First, then, we should come to the feeling of ownership, oneness, identity with the place where we dwell. We should appropriate it in some proper sense, as our chosen home, and feel that it and its belongings are our own. It is too much the fault with many that they do not conclude to stay permanently, they hold themselves aloof, they continue their home attachments elsewhere, rather anticipate a dissolution of these ties, and account this a mere place of temporary sojourn. Thus they fail to thoroughly identify themselves and appreciate and get the good of their adopted place of residence. They may still remain all their lives, but they stop only as pilgrims on the journey, and never in reality are at home here. They are thus too critical, always finding fault, magnifying the merits of some other locality, and never discovering those of the place where they now are. Let such only once fully make up their minds to remain, to be at home, to become thoroughly identified, and they will soon discover reasons enough for feeling that no place can be better for them.

Thus having concluded to abide here, the next obligation naturally developed will be to seek the *benefit* of the place of one's residence, in every proper way. Having some common feeling with the people, becoming really identified with the interests of the city, one will feel prompted to seek its good in every sense. Its good name, and prosperity and real welfare, will be in a sense one's

own. Something of *public spirit* will inspire every man of any true nobility of nature. Public spirit is nearly allied to true benevolence. And if one has any goodness in him, he will desire the prosperity of the city in which he dwells.

But to be more specific. One whose feelings are right in this matter, will really desire and seek the *material* welfare of the city he resides in. He will not merely desire to enrich himself, caring nothing for the rest. He will not make the city and all its interests subservient to his own emolument, caring nothing for *its* future history and prospects. He will feel that the city is more than himself, its life and history and welfare far greater than his own; and if he judges wisely, he will also conclude that *its* prosperity is identified with his own, nor ever wish to prosper at its expense. It is not becoming at all to use the advantages of a given place to enrich one's self, and then turn from it, and rail at it with supercilious contempt. Nor is it fair to thus benefit and enrich one's self by means of its advantages, and then do all that can be done to strip it, and despoil it, and transfer to other regions the resources and power acquired, to build up and benefit elsewhere. There is such a thing as *ingratitude* to our former home and sphere of action. There is such a thing as foolish pride and conceit, in professedly outgrowing the humble sphere of one's rapid prosperity. And it is a pride that is *very* apt to have a fall. There have been men that lived and prospered here, and then removed, that have had occasion to say sadly, a thousand times, "Oh, that I had stood by the Central City." Had they been *just* to Peoria it would have been *generous* to them.

It is our duty also to seek the improvement of our city in its general appearance. We should aim to make it æsthetically what nature designed it to be, "beautiful for situation, the joy of this whole region." God does not give such beautiful sites that we may deform them. He has never rounded these heights, spread out these smooth surfaces, swept around us these enclosing bluffs in such

graceful curves, that we may cut them all in pieces, block them off in crooked, notched, unsightly irregularities; or allow them to be washed and torn, and spoiled by the floods and storms. How carefully he clothed all with verdure for thousands of years, and kept them shapely and beautiful till civilized man took possession; and now shall everything picturesque be destroyed? We should study the pattern and improve on its details and finish. And every one that *does* make improvement should have credit for doing so. When any wealthy citizen, like our friend, Mr. PULSIFER, devotes years of work, and large sums of money to public improvement, let us not hesitate to express our gratification and gratitude. When any citizen who can afford it builds him a family mansion that is an ornament to the city and a pleasure to every eye that beholds it, let us show that we are pleased, and that we can appreciate. And so of all the improvements in business houses and manufactories, and all the architectural creations. It is a real help and a real good to us. How much better for us every way, that such improvements should be made by those who are able to do it, than that they should hoard their resources, and keep their funds stored away in useless inaction. It gives employment to the laborer, it makes business for the trader, and it cultivates the taste, and lifts up the people, and gives healthful pleasure to all. It adds to the beauty, worth and desirableness of the city as a home for us all. Not a thousand dollars is spent thus by any one that we do not *all* receive some benefit from.

But while saying this, it must not be forgotten how desirable it is that all should have homes who can, however small and humble they may be. This should always be encouraged. The *home* identifies the people with the place, and *their* interests with the *general* interests of the city. Let the *little* homes, then, be multiplied; the more the better for us all. Let the Saving Banks be encouraged. Let the Building Association be cherished. Let the lots be cheapened as much as may be, and the lines of horse railroad

extend and accommodate and distribute the people. It will be for greater health and enlargement, and real prosperity. Give a glad welcome everywhere to any real home and dwelling place for a live human family. For there is the nucleus, the real and permanent center for another series of real and heartfelt thanksgivings. We always want *homes* for the celebration of this anniversary. It is the *home-feast* above every other.

Again, we should seek to promote the *intellectual* advancement of the people with whom we dwell; our own and their's together. This is an object worthy of sacrifice, worthy of large expenditure, worthy of our painstaking and earnest effort. Our public schools already do us credit. All honor to the men who have given them so much care, and time, and labor. Large outlays must still be made in this line to meet their constantly growing wants, and to keep up with the general progress of taste and culture, and wealth in this growing city. Let these outlays never be begrudged.

A beginning has been made in the matter of a library, and of furnishing facilities for reading the best literary productions of every kind; but it is only a beginning. It is to be hoped that a vast enlargement in this direction will be made; that the interest in this matter will become more general, and that something adequate to the wants of the whole city will be provided.

There is need also of an increased interest in and taste for literary and scientific lectures, and all other means of diffusing useful intelligence, of cultivating and developing the spiritual nature, and lifting us above the debasing pleasures that are so common, and the degrading appetites that now enslave so many. Everything that lifts us up, purifies and refines us, is to be encouraged. Everything that helps the people on to a higher and better and happier life is to be sought after eagerly. Let social wants be met as much as may be, in circumstances where groveling vices will not be attendant on them, nor any temptations to such

vices. Let innocent enjoyments and proper intercourse among young people be encouraged by good people, and in the company of good people; and do not seek to banish such things from our homes and churches, and drive these youth upon dangerous and forbidden ground, where their enjoyments will invariably involve them in evil courses. God has provided for our enjoyment, our social good, our acquaintance, and our free play of social feeling, and social intercourse, from beginning to end of life. And as sure as we make society artificial, impose needless restraints, shut out innocent enjoyment, drive the lively and the young all away from us, we shall do them harm, and harm our city, and make it more criminal and vicious than ever. The crusty, crabbed piety that would proscribe a genial and cheerful tea-social in connection with one of our church organizations, I do think is no Christ-like piety at all. It is a kind of religion that I fear will have much evil to atone for in this world. The spirit of our Lord at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, at the Pharisee's house, in the house of Zaccheus the Publican, and of Simon the leper, and I know not how many other places seems to me altogether different from this. It is the spirit of a cheerful and gladsome social Thanksgiving occasion. I hope we shall all cherish it to-day. And I hope we shall better learn how to embody these divine attractions in ourselves, so as to draw towards us and towards virtue's lovely path, the wandering and sinful and fallen, as our Savior did.

But I must not close without noticing our duty to do all we can to advance the people morally and religiously in the city of our residence. This indeed is the foremost thing that we should seek for them. This is the very climax of all real good. The *moral character* of our city should be, of all things, dear to us. For all other good depends on this, more than all things else. Its temperance, its charity, its probity, honor and uprightness, we should care for deeply. We should be very sensitive as to its reputation and character on these points. Every thing that damages us in these

respects should hurt us individually. "This is my home, and these my fellow citizens," our thoughts should be. This slur upon Peoria, this occurrence that disgraces our city, is a burden and a sorrow upon every good citizen that dwells here. Thus should our feeling, and our practice, and our influence be a safeguard, a constant sentinel on the watch, a ready police-force to restrain the wrong, rebuke the offender, and turn away the evil that is a damage to us all.

Just suppose for a moment, that we could make this city pre-eminent for its morality, its uprightness, its real probity and sterling integrity in every respect, what a revolution could be wrought by it! Such an impulse would be given to us as never before. Such thrift, wealth, strength, vigor and progress would be given us that we would hardly know ourselves. The dream of progress and prosperity and beauty I have given you could be quickly fulfilled and more than fulfilled. In *half* the time I have suggested we could have the splendid parks, and the beautiful drives, and teams and turn-outs to drive on them also. It is no question of money and means at all, but simply how the money shall be used. Enough is consumed on liquors and tobacco alone in this place to soon fill out the picture I have given you, beautifying all our surroundings, multiplying our homes, and causing our public improvements to *transform* the present aspect of things.

We should strive for it then. We may not accomplish it all in our day; but every fallen youth you rescue helps on the golden period; every tempted and endangered one that you fortify and save is bringing it still nearer. Every lie you expose, every cheat that you prevent, every item of rascality you discourage and forestall is *something* done for the rule of righteousness and for the coming of the brighter day.

Who can help feeling that this city is worth saving? Who would not like to see Peoria the thriving mart of trade, the center of boundless manufacturing, the place of beautiful residences, the city of rare intellectual taste and culture,

the most delightful home of the great interior State, and the safest, most honest, most moral and principled city anywhere to be found? Then let us try and make it such. What a destiny awaits us, if we can make the world feel that Peoria can be trusted! What a future we have before us if God our maker can be duly exalted here, and His law be written on our hearts and carried out in our lives? Let the hope inspire us. And let the high aspiration cheer us on to noble endeavors, to act well our individual part in promoting such glad consummation.



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